

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9839

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION USBERLIN

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AMCONSUL STUTTGART

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 07188

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: ELECTION RESULTS IN NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA

AND SAARLAND FAVOR BONN COALITION

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE CDU MADE SMALL GAINS IN BOTH THE NORTH
RHINE-WESTPHALIAN (NRW) AND SAARLAND ELECTIONS AND
REMAINED THE SINGLE LARGEST PARTY IN BOTH LAENDER. HOW-
EVER, THE SPD/FDP COALITION MANAGED TO RETAIN CONTROL
OF THE LANDTAG IN GERMANY'S MOST POPULOUS LAND (NRW).

IN ADDITION, THE RE-ENTRY OF THE FDP INTO THE SAARLAND

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LANDTAG , WHICH PREVENTED THE CDU FROM GAINING A MAJOR-

ITY (THE CDU HAS 25 SEATS AND THE SPD/FDP HAS 25 SEATS), WILL END THE CDU/CSU MAJORITY IN THE BUNDESRAT. THE RESURGENCE OF THE LIBERAL PARTY SHOULD ALSO MAKE THE FDP A MORE STABLE AND CONFIDENT PARTNER IN THE BONN COALITION.

END
SUMMARY

1. THE LONG AWAITED NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIAN ELECTION IS OVER. WHILE THE CDU MANAGED TO PICK UP ADDITIONAL VOTES AND REMAINS THE LARGEST SINGLE PARTY IN NRW, THE SPD/FDP COALITION, LED BY MINISTER PRESIDENT HEINZ KUEHN REMAINS FIRMLY ENTRENCHED IN THE LANDTAG IN DUESSELDORF. THE CDU POLLED 47.1 PERCENT COMPARED TO 46.3 PERCENT IN THE 1970 LANDTAG ELECTION, THE SPD RECEIVED 45.1 PERCENT COMPARED TO 46.1 PERCENT IN 1970, AND THE FDP RECEIVED 6.7 PERCENT COMPARED TO 5.5 PERCENT IN 1970. THE DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS IN THE NEW LANDTAG WILL BE: CDU 95, SPD 91, FDP 14. THE DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS IN THE NEW LANDTAG: 105 FOR THE SOCIAL-LIBERAL COALITION VS. 95 FOR THE CDU, REPRESENTS A GAIN FOR THE COALITION. (THE CDU HELD 98 SEATS IN THE PRESENT LANDTAG AS A RESULT OF THREE DEFECTIONS FROM THE FDP DURING THE LEGISLATIVE PERIOD.)

2. THE COMMUNAL ELECTIONS THAT OCCURRED CONCURRENTLY WITH THE LANDTAG ELECTION IN NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA PROVIDE A MIXED PICTURE. THE SPD LOST GROUND IN DUESSELDORF, COLOGNE AND WUPPERTAL, AND MADE GAINS IN AACHEN, BOCHUM AND ESSEN.

3. THE DEAD HEAT FINISH IN THE SAARLAND (I.E., CDU 25 SEATS, SPD PLUS FDP 25 SEATS) IS OF PARTICULAR NATIONAL INTEREST BECAUSE IT WILL AFFECT THE BALANCE IN THE BUNDESRAT. AT THE PRESENT TIME, THE CDU/CSU LAENDER HAVE A ONE VOTE MAJORITY WHICH HAS ENABLED THEM TO DEFEAT OR AMEND SOME OF THE KEY GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED BILLS PASSED BY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE BUNDESTAG. FOLLOWING THE SAARLAND ELECTION, ASSUMING THAT ON CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES THE SAARLAND REPRESENTATION IN THE BUNDESRAT ABSTAINS BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF A MAJORITY AT HOME, THE SPD/FDP LAENDER WILL HAVE TWO VOTES MORE THAN THE CDU/CSU LAENDER BUT WILL LACK AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY (AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IS NECESSARY IN THE CASE OF BILLS THAT REQUIRE BUNDESRAT CONSENT). WHILE ALL THREE MAJOR PARTIES GAINED IN

THE SAARLAND, THE LIBERAL PARTY'S RE-ENTRY INTO THE
LANDTAG IS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT RESULTS OF THE
ELECTIONS.

4. ALTHOUGH THE CDU CONTINUED TO GAIN AT THE POLLS
AND REMAINS THE LARGEST SINGLE PARTY IN NORTH RHINE-
WESTPHALIA AND THE SAARLAND, THE ELECTION RESULTS MUST
BE SEEN AS A BOOST FOR THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT. IN NRW,
THE CDU GAINS WERE LESS THAN ONE PERCENT AND SPD LOSSES
WERE HELD TO ONE PERCENT. THE FDP ONCE AGAIN WAS THE
BIG WINNER WITH A 1.2 PERCENT INCREASE. COMMENTING ON
TELEVISION, CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT EXPRESSED SATISFACTION

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WITH THE ELECTION RESULTS AND SAID HE FELT THAT THE SPD WOULD HAVE DONE EVEN BETTER IF THE ELECTIONS WERE HELD LATER WHEN THE ECONOMIC SITUATION WOULD BE IMPROVED. MAINTAINING CONTROL OF WEST GERMANY'S MOST POPULOUS LAND IS IMPORTANT TO THE BONN COALITION BOTH IN PRACTICAL AND SYMBOLIC TERMS.

5. THE RESURGENCE OF THE LIBERAL PARTY MAY PRESENT SOME PROBLEMS FOR THE SPD. THE FDP IS LIKELY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO BE MORE SELF-CONFIDENT AND ASSERTIVE WITHIN THE COALITION ON ISSUES SUCH AS INDUSTRIAL CODETERMINATION. ONE COMMENTATOR HAS POINTED OUT THAT IN THE PAST THE FDP COULD AGREE TO BILLS THAT DID NOT HAVE ITS FULL SYMPATHY BECAUSE THE LIBERALS KNEW THAT THE BILLS WOULD BE ALTERED BY THE CDU/CSU MAJORITY IN THE BUNDESRAT. NOW IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO HAMMER OUT THESE COMPROMISES WITHIN THE COALITION. ON THE PLUS SIDE, A SECURE AND CONFIDENT FDP IS LIKELY TO BE A MORE PREDICTABLE AND RATIONAL PARTNER IN THE COALITION THAN IT WAS SOME MONTHS AGO WHEN ITS PRIMARY CONCERN WAS THE SURVIVAL OF THE PARTY. EDUCATION MINISTER ROHDE TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER ELECTION NIGHT THAT ALTHOUGH THE FDP WAS LIKELY TO BE MORE FIRM IN ARGUING FOR ITS POSITIONS IN THE COALITION, HE FELT IT WAS A HEALTHIER SITUATION FOR THE SPD TO HAVE A STABLE AND SECURE COALITION PARTNER.

6. SOME OF THE ELECTION RESULTS PROVIDE CONSOLATION FOR THE CDU. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS CONTINUED TO GAIN AT THE POLLS, AND PERHAPS MORE SIGNIFICANTLY FOR THE LONG RUN, THEY CONTINUE TO MAKE INROADS IN THE BIG CITIES WHICH TRADITIONALLY WERE SPD STRONGHOLDS. THERE WILL BE CONSIDERABLE SOUL SEARCHING IN THE CDU ABOUT THE ROLE FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS PLAYED IN THE NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIAN ELECTION AND THERE IS LIKELY TO BE SOME SERIOUS THOUGHT GIVEN AS TO THE LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT CAMPAIGN STRATEGY. IN GENERAL, THE CDU CAMPAIGN IN NRW WAS LONG ON PUBLIC RELATIONS GIMMICKS AND SHORT ON PROGRAM PROPOSALS. THE SPD, LED BY KUEHN AND CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT, STRESSED CONCRETE SPD ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS WELL AS PROMISING AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE ECONOMIC SITUATION. THE GOVERNMENT'S FIRM HANDLING OF THE STOCKHOLM TERRORIST INCIDENT SEEMS TO HAVE NEUTRALIZED THE INTERNAL SECURITY ISSUE IN THE ELECTIONS. IF THE

GERMAN ECONOMY IMPROVES BETWEEN NOW AND NOVEMBER 1976,
THERE IS GROUND FOR SPD/FDP OPTIMISM ABOUT NEXT YEAR'S
BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS. IN ANY EVENT, THE COALITION PART-
NERS ARE RELIEVED THAT THE MAY 4 ELECTIONS ARE BEHIND
THEM, AND THAT FOR THEM THE RESULTS WERE POSITIVE.
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